

NEWS RELEASE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

Commissioner Claire DeMatteis

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DOC announces inmate death, provides updated on COVID-19 recoveries and additional test results

Dover, DE -- The Delaware Department of Correction (DOC) today announced that **Robert Francisco**, a 79 year-old inmate with underlying health conditions from James T. Vaughn Correctional Center (JTVCC), died on Saturday evening, April 25 at Bayhealth Hospital, Kent Campus from complications from Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and COVID. Francisco was part of a minimum security housing unit that has been closely monitored since April 8, with twice daily temperature checks and proactive COVID-19 testing on April 10. His first test was returned as negative, as was a second COVID-19 test administered at JTVCC on April 13. When daily monitoring revealed that Francisco was registering a fever on April 16, he was immediately moved to the prison infirmary and then admitted to Bayhealth Hospital, Kent Campus later that same day. A third COVID-19 test administered on April 16 was returned as positive. In recent days Francisco's condition deteriorated and he had been receiving palliative care since April 24.

Francisco, of Newark, DE, has been in DOC custody since 1986 and was serving a 60-year sentence for unlawful sexual intercourse.

DOC also announced today that **a total of 9 inmates have recovered from COVID-19**, including 1 new recovery in addition to 8 announced earlier this week. These inmates are currently housed in a transitional housing unit in the JTVCC COVID-19 treatment center. The DOC also announced this past week that a Correctional Officer and Probation Officer have fully recovered from the illness.

These recoveries come as DOC continues an intensive two-week operation to combat COVID-19 within the two facilities where positive inmate COVID cases have occurred, building on the daily temperature checks and close monitoring of more than 1,750 inmates at these facilities. This targeted operation is concentrated in buildings at James T. Vaughn Correctional Center (JTVCC) and Sussex Community Corrections Center (SCCC) that have experienced COVID cases and includes:

- Twice daily inmate temperature checks for more than 1,750 inmates;
- Distribution of face masks **to all inmates at JTVCC and SCCC, bringing to more than 2,100 the number of inmates issued face masks across correctional facilities;**

- Expanded proactive inmate COVID testing;
- Increased use of specialized cleaning, on top of the current twice-daily cleanings, utilizing a disinfecting machine that employs an airborne mist to sterilize entire rooms;
- Voluntary COVID testing to all Officers at JTVCC and SCCC in recognition of the continued risk of infection from outside as community spread continues.

The DOC today also announced additional COVID-19 test results. Review an informational chart of positive COVID-19 cases among DOC employees, contracted staff and inmates for each DOC facility by [clicking HERE](#).

The latest positive test results are as follows:

- **One inmate from the Sussex Community Corrections Center (SCCC) in Georgetown.** This inmate, who has multiple pre-existing conditions, arrived at the facility on a Violation of Probation on April 23 and was immediately isolated as directed by the DOC's COVID-19 protocol. On April 24, after displaying symptoms of illness, the inmate was admitted to an area hospital, where a COVID-19 test was administered. The positive test result was returned on April 25. The inmate remains in an area hospital in stable condition.
- **Three inmates from a minimum security building at JTVCC** that has been closely monitored for more than two weeks, including twice daily forehead temperature checks and distribution of face masks to building residents. After displaying signs of illness, the inmates were isolated and a COVID-19 test was administered. The positive test result was received on April 25. Two of the inmates are being treated in the prison infirmary and are in stable condition, and one inmate has been moved to the JTVCC COVID-19 treatment center.
- **Two Correctional Officers assigned to JTVCC.** The Officers were last on duty 6 days ago - on April 20, and 5 days ago - on April 21, respectively. **All Officers have been required to wear face masks since April 10 while on duty.** After beginning to experience flu-like symptoms, the Officers began to self-isolate at home, and as symptoms developed sought medical attention, at which time COVID-19 tests were administered. The positive COVID-19 test results were received by the Officers on April 25 and subsequently verified by the DOC. This brings the total to 27 Correctional Officers statewide to test positive for the virus.

No additional information will be provided about the identity of the inmates or the officers for privacy protection.

“The Delaware Department of Correction and our healthcare professionals continue our rigorous efforts to contain any cases of COVID-19 to a minimum and medium housing facility at the prison in Smyrna and a work release center in Sussex County,” **said Commissioner Claire DeMatteis.** “The 16 inmates who have tested positive and have symptoms of the virus are receiving excellent care. An additional 22 inmates who have tested positive through our aggressive proactive testing are asymptomatic with no signs of a fever, cough, shortness of

breath or other symptoms. These asymptomatic inmates remain in quarantine in the DOC COVID Treatment Center for further screenings and monitoring.”

Note: The Department of Correction is doubling the safeguards recommended by the CDC to determine when inmates have recovered from COVID-19 and are safe to be taken out of isolation, by requiring that 14 days, rather than 7 days, have passed since the positive COVID test was administered, that 3 days have passed during which the patient remains fever and symptom-free AND that a follow up COVID test returns negative. For inmates with immunocompromised underlying health issues, DOC has adopted an even stricter recovery standard of 21 days.

The DOC is employing a variety of prevention, screening, cleaning and containment measures to guard against the spread of the novel coronavirus, including:

- All persons, including Officers, administrative staff and probationers who enter any Level V prison, Level IV violation of probation or work release center, or Probation and Parole Office are screened for COVID-19, including a series of questions and a forehead temperature check with a thermometer
- Staff who present with symptoms are sent home to self-quarantine and directed to contact their health care provider.
- Newly arriving inmates are held in isolation for the first 14 days, during which they are carefully monitored, including daily temperature checks with a thermometer.
- DOC has implemented extra daily cleaning of DOC facilities and is using specialized fogging machines to disinfect entire rooms of common areas, housing units and workspaces.
- Face masks are being worn by Correctional Officers and contract healthcare workers as a protection for inmates, Officers and other employees. All Correctional Officers have been wearing face masks since April 10. Face masks have been provided to inmates who are in infirmaries, those with compromised immune systems, those with certain institutional jobs, such as food service, and those in housing buildings where inmates have tested positive for COVID-19.
- Most Probationer visits with Probation Officers were transitioned to phone check-ins in March to support social distancing measures. In addition, the DOC has temporarily suspended in-person prison programming to reduce the movement of people into facilities and movement of groups of people within facilities.

Certain programs, including treatment and education programs and religious programming, are being transitioned to a virtual video format. Inmates continue to have outside recreation opportunities within their confined areas and continue to have access to phones to stay in regular contact with their loved ones. DOC is also expanding the use of electronic tablets among the inmate population, where available.

Get updated information about the DOC's response to COVID-19 and read previous announcements of positive COVID-19 cases by visiting <https://doc.delaware.gov>, and follow *decorrection* on Facebook and Twitter.

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